

Washington -- On Tuesday, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez introduced the third piece of her five-part Safe Kids Initiative — the Internet Safety Education Act, which provides federal support to programs that combat online bullies and predators.

“These days, unlike when I was a kid, bullying doesn’t end when a child gets home; it follows him or her through e-mail and text messaging,” said Rep. Sánchez, a Member of the House Committees on Judiciary, and Education and Labor. “It is critical that we provide children, parents, educators, and communities with the tools they need to keep children safe online.”

This bi-partisan bill would reauthorize Congressional funding for i-Safe, Inc., a program that uses classroom curriculum and community outreach to make the Internet a safer place. After completing the i-Safe program, 97 percent of children say they will tell a parent or guardian if someone makes them uncomfortable online. For the past three years, the non-profit program has used public and private funding to empower students, teachers, parents and law enforcement to make the internet a safer place. In addition to authorizing \$5 million in federal funding over five years for i-Safe, the bill would also create a competitive grant program to help fund other internet safety education programs.

A leader of Congressional efforts to increase child safety both in and out of school, Congresswoman Sánchez developed the Safe Kids Initiative to address this all-important issue on several fronts. The Safe Kids Initiative also includes the Bullying and Gang Reduction for Improved Education Act and the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which were introduced earlier this year. Both bills equip schools with the resources they need to prevent school bullying and harassment, providing safe learning environments to reduce the nation’s growing drop-out rate. Portions of these bills were included in draft legislation to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act that was unveiled earlier this month.

“Bullying is not a harmless rite of passage for children,” said Rep. Sánchez. “Three-quarters of all school shooting incidents have been linked to bullying and harassment, and victims of bullying and harassment are more likely to be depressed or suicidal. This is a problem we need to fix.”

A broad range of educational and other organizations have expressed support for the Safe Schools Improvement Act, including the American Library Association; the National PTA; the American Federation of Teachers; Big Brothers Big Sisters of America; the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network; the National Council of La Raza; and the Human Rights Campaign.